DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 025 021 EA 001 822

The Area Educational Service Agency. Four-State (South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri) Conference Report (November 28-29, 1967).

Great Plains School District Organization Project, Lincoln, Nebr.
Pub Date 25 May 68
Note- 10p.
Journal Cit- Great Plains School District Organization Project; v2 n3 May 25 1968
EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.60
Descriptors- *Agency Role, Conference Reports, *Public School Systems, Question Answer Interviews, *Regional Programs, *Supplementary Educational Centers

The third of three conference reports contains (1) a paper citing the needs for and discussing the characteristics, functions, and benefits of area educational service agencies. (2) panel discussion questions and answers concerning area educational districts. (3) questions and answers concerning the Boards of Cooperative Educational Services plan in New York State. (4) questions and answers concerning multicounty regional districts as viewed by a county superintendent, and (5) a summary of reports of each of the conference's eight discussion groups. (SS/TT)

GREAT PLAINS SCHOOL DISTRICT ORGANIZATION PROJECT

CONFERENCE REPORT

Vol. 2, No. 3 May 25, 1968

ED025021

THE AREA EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCY

TRENDS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF AREA EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCIES

- Abandonment of the intermediate unit known as the county system of schools.
- The creation of a new, larger, and more serviceable intermediate organization.
- A distinct movement away from regulatory to service functions.
- The development of multi-county service districts.
- The providing of all programs and services which necessitate a large pupil base and/or a high per pupil cost to make possible both the quantity and the quality of educational opportunities with efficiency and economy of operation.
- The providing of cooperative and coordinating services for all member districts.
- Increasing emphasis on research and development through the area agency.
- Development and provision of long-range planning for education under the leadership of the area service agency.

THREE CONFERENCE REPORTS

This is the third of three reports on the four-state Conference held November 28–29, 1967. The first brochure (Volume 2, Number 1) presented (1) a summary of addresses concerning area and metropolitan planning and development, (2) conference membership, and (3) a report on the responses by conference participants concerning organizational questions for vocational education and for area educational service districts. The second brochure (Volume 2, Number 3) was devoted to addresses and discussion group reports on school district organization for vocational education.

THE EMERGING EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCY

E. R. STEPHENS
University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa

JOHN SPIESS
University of Toledo, Toledo, Ohio

EDITOR'S NOTE: Dr. Stephens, assisted by Dr. Spiess, has just completed a carefully developed project report for Linn County, Iowa, on a multi-county regional service agency in education. Visitations were made to eleven of the outstanding intermediate unit operations in the nation for a study in depth of their organization and functional programs. His four-volume report constitutes one of the major contributions to the literature available in this field today. Dr. Stephens drew upon these experiences in preparing this position paper for the Great Plains School District Organization Project.

The Major Needs of Public Elementary and Secondary Education and the Need for a New Type of Educational Service Agency

In many, if not most, of the states, the major needs in the provision of elementary and secondary education are related essentially to the inadequacies of local school districts (the assumption is made here that this unit of school administration will continue to be the central one in the provision of educational programs in most states). Their inadequacies stem in large part from one or more of the following characteristics of many local school districts:

- Inadequate enrollment size:
  - —few school districts have enrollments in excess of 10,000 students in grades K–12, the figure generally accepted as the optimum size of an administrative unit.
  - —in most states the additional reorganization of local school districts and the creation of larger

(continued on page 2)

ED025021

EA 001 822

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

(continued from page 1)

administrative units will surely be beneficial and should be supported by all. The state has the obligation to create the strongest districts possible within geographical and other limitations.

- Deficiencies in educational programs, such as:
  - —lack of comprehensiveness in course offerings
  - —inadequate curriculum development
  - —inadequate provision of special services
  - —inadequacy of programs and services for exceptional children
- Inadequate provision of professional personnel:
  - —inability to assign professional personnel to full-time teaching assignments in their major areas of preparation
  - —inability to provide meaningful and on-going staff development programs
- Inadequate financial resources

Recognition of the needs of local school districts to receive assistance from an outside agency leads to questions concerning the nature of the various educational agencies. In most states having a three-echelon structure (local school district, county or intermediate unit, and state education agency), the most important agency is the middle-echelon unit. The middle unit of a three-echelon state school system appears to be the most appropriate agency to serve in a critical role: This is true because its place between the two other levels of school government makes it close enough to local school districts to be aware of and responsive to local needs, and yet it is broadly enough conceived to provide needed services. However, as presently structured in most states, the middle unit of school administration is wholly unable to assume this role.

In most states, if the middle agency is to perform a vital role in the state system of education, it must undergo pronounced changes in its structure and philosophy. The necessary adaptations must begin with the creation of area educational service agencies (AESA Units) processing sufficient enrollment and financial resources to be able to plan comprehensive programs and services in response to the needs of local school districts, large and small, within its constituency, and to attract qualified personnel to supplement these programs at a high level of competency. In view of the unequal educational opportunities in most states and the increasing demands placed on education by a changing society, the need for this change is urgent.

Characteristics of Strong Area Educational Service Agencies

Certain characteristics of strong area educational service agencies can be identified. Some of the major ones within six broad areas are:

- Governance and organization:
  - —a popularly elected independent governing board.
  - —board appointment of the chief administrative officer and staff.
  - —a prominent role for advisory committees composed of representatives of local school districts.
  - —the service unit is under the jurisdiction of the state education agency.
  - —the state education agency is empowered to establish such rules, regulations, and standards as may be desirable for the effective administration and operation of the unit.
  - —the governing board has authority to develop its own rules and regulations subject to the policies of the state education agency and statutory and constitutional considerations.
  - —the administrative organization adheres to basic administrative and organizational theories and concepts.
- Area or service base:
  - —all areas of the state are included in a service agency.
  - —all local districts of the state are eligible for participation in the programs and services of the service unit.
  - —an area large enough which will make possible a maximum offering of programs and services so that the present and future needs of local school districts can be met.
  - —a pupil population base of 30,000 to 50,000.
  - —a maximum driving time of one hour from the service center or centers to local school districts.
  - —some recognition given to the natural socio-economic community.
- Programs and services:
  - —the service unit is an integral part of the state school system.
  - —the basic orientation of the service unit is for the provision of services to local school districts.
  - —few specific functions of the service unit are prescribed by statute.
  - —the service unit provides services to local school districts that are unable to provide services as efficiently, effectively, and economically.
  - —the services of the unit are physically and operationally accessible to constituent local districts
  - —the services of the unit are based on detailed study and analysis of the needs of local school districts.
  - —the services of the unit are periodically reviewed on a systematic basis to determine changing needs and the effectiveness of existing programs.
  - —the continuous evaluation and assessment of existing programs are built-in processes, and constituent local districts play a major role in the evaluation and assessment of programs and services.
- Financial structure:
  - —the financial resources of the unit are definite and reliable.
  - —the service unit enjoys fiscal independence and fiscal integrity.
  - —the service unit possesses independent tax-levying powers.
  - —the service unit has the power to enter into contracts.

(continued on page 3)

(continued from page 2)

—the service unit has authority to incur bonded indebtedness.
—the service unit is eligible to receive state financial assistance and federal grants.

- Staffing patterns:
  —the staff of the service unit is characterized by a high degree of specialization.
  —the staff of the service unit is characterized by a high degree of professional competence and sophistication, resulting in their being "in demand" by constituent local districts.
  —the service unit is committed to a comprehensive staff development program for its own personnel.
- Legislative structure:
  —the service unit enjoys a high degree of functional and organizational flexibility.
  —the service unit is organized on a regional base, not a base determined by county or other "artificial" boundaries.
  —the service unit is empowered to develop cooperative programs and services with other educational, health, welfare, and social agencies in the public and private sectors.

The Function of Area Educational Service Agencies

- Articulative functions:
  —The regional educational service agency, as an arm of the state education agency and financed in part by state aid, should perform a number of regulatory and ministerial functions for the state education agency. In this sense it localizes state school system operations and at the same time represents and interprets local educational needs at the state level. By performing these liaison functions, the area educational service agency serves a vital role in the vertical and horizontal development and implementation of statewide educational planning and in the administration of the state school system.
- Coordinative functions:
  —The area educational service agency in its coordinative role should provide one of its major contributions to its constituent local school districts and to the state system of education. By coordinating the work of local school districts, it serves a vital leadership role in the improvement of education. This will usually be done by assisting local school districts in working together to solve their common problems and needs.
  —In addition, these coordinative functions help protect the local control and the independence of local school districts in that coordinative functions are provided among and for school districts rather than the area educational service agency assuming primary responsibility for them.
- Supplementary service functions:
  —The area educational service agency, in its supplemental service role, complements the local school districts by providing direct educational services to them which they are unable to provide efficiently, effectively, or economically by themselves. Generally, these direct services are the type that local school districts would provide but are unable to do so because of limited student population, financial resources, personnel, or other factors.[1]
  —The provision of these direct services also protects local control, and, of great importance, helps to equalize and extend quality educational opportunities to all children, regardless of economic status or place of residency. It does not necessarily follow that the provision of these direct services to smaller, marginal school districts will perpetuate such districts and serve as an obstacle to the creation of administrative units of adequate size. Rather, there is sufficient empirical evidence that a strong regional educational service agency will promote, not retard, local school district reorganization, particularly when other complementary legal incentives for school district reorganization exist. This is true because regional services, by equalizing opportunities, remove one of the major obstacles to school district reorganization.
- Illustrative examples of programs and services:
  —The potential programs and services of regional service units are many. For purposes of illustration, programs and services found in exemplary units have been arbitrarily classified into the following five categories: (1) Administrative and Staff Personnel, (2) Instructional, (3) Student Personnel, (4) Special Education, and (5) Research and Development.
  —Administrative and staff personnel programs and services:
    —A large number of administrative and staff personnel programs and services are required in the effective operation of an educational institution. Illustrative examples of potential programs and services of an area unit include:
      —Administrative and business management consultant services.
      —In-service programs for members of boards of education and board secretaries and treasurers.
      —School building site consultant services.
      —School district reorganization consultant services.
      —Data processing services.
      —Public information services.
      —Cooperative purchasing programs.

[1] A large number of systems are currently in use in classifying programs and services of Intermediate Units. The system used in this report, that is, of the major categories—articulative, coordinative, and supplemental service functions—was perected by Alvin E. Rhodes in his excellent monograph: "Better Education Through Effective Intermediate Units." Department of Rural Education, National Education Association, Washington, D.C., 1963.

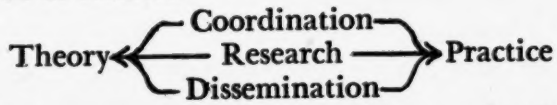
(continued on page 4)

THE EMERGING EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCY

(continued from page 3)

—In-service programs for classroom teachers, specialists, supervisors, consultants, and administrators.
—In-service programs for non-certificated personnel including transportation, food services, maintenance and custodial, secretarial and clerical, and other supportive personnel.
—Substitute teacher services.
—Services for the state education agency.
—Coordinative activities with other health, welfare, and social agencies in the public and private sectors, and with other governmental subdivisions.

- Instructional programs and services:
  —It is in the area of instructional programs and services that the area educational service agency can make its greatest contribution. This is its primary *raison d'etre*. Illustrative examples include:
  —Educational media center.
  —Elementary and secondary curriculum consultant services.
  —Remedial instruction programs and services.
  —Testing programs and services.
  —Health consultant programs and services.
  —Outdoor education programs.
  —Institutionalized children's educational programs.
- Student personnel programs and services:
  —Student personnel services have become a highly specialized area in recent years. The contributions of comprehensive student personnel services to an educational program are well recognized. Illustrative examples include:
  —Consultant services for student personnel programs.
  —In-service programs for guidance counselors and other professional personnel.
  —Other student personnel programs and services including graduate follow-up studies and drop-out studies.
- Special education programs and services:
  —As part of its commitment to assist constituent local school districts in providing the best educational program possible for all children, AESA Units have a major responsibility in the education of exceptional children. Illustrative examples include:
  —Programs for trainable retarded children.
  —Work-study programs.
  —Programs for emotionally disturbed children.
  —Psychological and psychiatric services.
  —Programs for physically handicapped children and children with special health problems.
  —Programs for exceptional children of preschool age.
  —Homebound instruction programs.
  —Programs for gifted children.
  —Programs for partially-sighted and blind children.
  —Programs for hard-of-hearing and deaf children.
  —Programs for speech-handicapped children.
  —School social work services.
  —Programs for children with specific learning disabilities.
  —Providing cordinative and cooperative efforts for the many health, welfare, and social agencies in the public and private sectors.
- Research and development programs and services:
  —Educational research is a main form of investing in the educational process. Yet few school districts are able to engage in necessary research and development programs. While colleges and universities and professional organizations do contribute greatly to educational research, it is recognized that a definite lag exists in the implementation of the findings of this research.
  —It is in the area of research and development that AESA Units can make a major contribution. The role of an AESA Unit is visualized as follows:



- The agency is in a key position to develop theory into practice, to conduct practical research in the examination of current educational practices, and to coordinate and disseminate the finding of research. This will prove to be a major contribution to education, and exemplifies the regional educational service agency's vital role in the state system of education. Illustrative examples include:
  —Budget analysis and cost studies.
  —Long-range financial planning.
  —Community surveys.
  —Enrollment studies.
  —Pilot projects in various curricular areas.
  —Evaluation of instructional materials.
  —Development of local school district and regional norms for standardized tests.
  —Evaluation of various types of organizational and grouping practices.
- The above listings of illustrative examples in each of the five categories should not be considered as complete. Rather, they are intended to show the nature and scope of potential programs and services which might result from careful study and analysis of a given area.

In summary, the major areas of activity of the AESA Unit appear to be in:

1. The provision of consultant services of a wide variety to constituent local school districts.

(continued on page 5)

THE EMERGING EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCY

(continued from page 4)

2. The provision of in-service programs for professional and noncertificated personnel of local school districts.
3. The provision of special education programs and services.
4. The provision of research and development programs and services.

Major Benefits Resulting from a Statewide Network of Area Educational Service Agencies

If a network of area educational service agencies is developed in most states, and if these units are allowed to function without basic structural deficiencies, several major benefits to state systems of education will result. These units of school government can:

- Protect and promote local control and local determination in public education.
- Equalize and extend educational opportunities.
- Ensure the economical and efficient operation of many educational programs.
- Improve the quality of many educational programs.
- Provide a needed agent for change in education.
- Promote the restructuring of school government consistent with developments in the public and private sectors.
- Improve the coordination of local, regional, and statewide educational planning.

Alternative Approaches for the Improvement of Education

It should be recognized that there are a number of other alternatives for the improvement of a state system of public education which are available to decision makers in the several states. The major alternatives appear to be the following:

- To encourage the formation of larger local school districts with a minimum enrollment of 5,000 to 10,000 students in grades K-12.
- To encourage cooperative agreements between local administrative units.
- To decentralize the state education agency and create regional administrative and service branch offices throughout the state.
- To assign the responsibility for providing services to local school districts to post-high school institutions.

Each of these approaches is currently used to some degree in a number of states. Each, to be sure, has a number of arguments in its favor. However, each also has a number of basic philosophical or structural disadvantages which outweigh the advantages of their use individually or collectively in most states.

Summary

The area educational service agency has a bright future principally for these reasons:

- It is the most feasible approach, now and in the foreseeable future, of overcoming many existing inadequacies in education, of providing equal educational opportunities for all, and of protecting local control and local determination, important features of the American public school system.
- It is an improvement in the structure of the state system of education, and a necessary prerequisite to the implementation of many needed innovations in public elementary and secondary education.
- It permits greater efficiency and economy in the provision of many educational programs and services.
- It is consistent and compatible with a number of major discernible trends in both the public and private sectors toward the area approach, and with developments in intergovernmental relations.
- It is supported by recent legislation or interest in many states in all parts of the country.

The area educational service agency, in its newly emerging form, is a product of efforts to meet new needs in education. Its benefits have been demonstrated in many parts of the United States.

(continued from column 1)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS CONCERNING AREA EDUCATIONAL DISTRICTS

(PANEL DISCUSSION PERIOD)

Question: Shouldn't the area education service districts be regional arms of the State Department of Education?

Answer: The AESD does have certain functions to perform for the welfare of the state school system. It has a key role to play in the provision of leadership to the state education systems, statewide coordination, state-wide planning, long-range planning, and related services. However, there is a very real danger that the ministerial functions would tend to overshadow services to local school district.

Question: Wouldn't the coordination and financing be done better at the state level rather than at the area level?

Answer: A strong point might be made for it; however, the effectiveness of this coordination could be neutralized in some kind of high-level activity that isn't necessary. Financing is both a local and a state matter, and should remain that way.

Question: Wouldn't it be easier to sell financial responsibility to the state if the intermediate unit and the department of public instruction were tied together?

Answer: California, with its 1,000-mile length, has done this. They have moved people out of the department, such as specialists in school buildings, in data processing, etc., into county and regional offices. Thirty

(continued on page 6)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS CONCERNING AREA EDUCATIONAL DISTRICTS

(continued from page 5)

curriculum consultants in reading and foreign language are spread all over the state. Likewise, Pennsylvania has moved consultants out into the state in curriculum and certain other areas, but there remains a heavy commitment to the state educational agency.

Question: Would the AESD be an independent unit with taxing power, own property, and have a board of education elected by the citizens?

Answer: Right on all three counts.

Question: Would there be county boards and AESD boards?

Answer: No. The AESD boards and the AESD districts would replace the existing county systems of schools. This would reduce the number of districts and the number of boards, since several counties would be placed together in one district.

Question: On what basis will the AESD be different from any other organization that becomes stultified and itself becomes tradition bound?

Answer: Organizational change always runs the risk. However, I believe that such stagnation would be delayed and perhaps nullified due to the fact that the intermediate unit, staffed by highly competent people, would provide the leadership to improve programs and services. If they do this and do it well, the risk which you mention is greatly lessened.

Question: Will intermediate service units weaken or strengthen the departments of education?

Answer: I think that it will strangthen them. The intermediate unit will free the state education agency to do the kinds of things that it is committed to do and for which it is in the best position to do, such as provide leadership and statewide planning.

Question: Do we have the trained manpower available to do what you propose be done through the intermediate unit?

Answer: I think that some of the best professional positions in the state of Iowa will be in the AESA Units. They will be able to compete for staff personnel with the larger districts of the state, with the colleges and the universities, and with the community colleges. This will be true because they have something to offer that will constitute a real professional challenge and opportunity for leadership. It will make possible a professional commitment, or a kind of professional atmosphere that will attract the very best in educational leadership.

Question: Except for the political resistance, wouldn't the goal of maximum equality of education, and economy and efficiency of operation be much better served if the local districts included in the regional district were ultimately phased out?

Answer: No, I think not, very definitely. What I'm suggesting is a reasonably attainable goal, forgetting the political environment. There are some limitations because of the demographic and geographic characteristics of many states that will prevent us from getting administrative districts that are identical with the intermediate unit. There is a need to coordinate a large school district, with its service needs, its coordi-

THE BOCES ORGANIZATION IN NEW YORK

MR. RICHARD D. SPARKS

Supervisor, Bureau of School District Organization
The State Department of Education
Albany, New York

Editor's note: Mr. Sparks came as a guest to the Conference. Although he was not scheduled to be on the program, a part of one session was devoted to a discussion of intermediate unit developments in various parts of the country. Mr. Sparks very graciously consented to answer questions about the New York plan.

Question: What is BOCES, and what are some of its chief characteristics?

Answer: BOCES stands for Boards of Cooperative

(continued on page 7)

(continued from column 1)

native activities, etc., with each neighboring district. This need can be served by the AESD.

Comment from the audience: I've always felt that whatever business would do, and whatever industry would do, it ought to be economical and feasible for government to do. I don't anticipate a resistance to the elimination of local governmental units in the future that we've had in the past because of the great increase in cost. I'm for this program. And I anticipate that ultimately the local school district would phase out. I would hope so, anyway.

Question: How are you going to sell this third echelon? Our people are ready to do away with the county superintendent's office. Now you are proposing a super area office of the same variety.

Answer: We've got to sell this program on the basis of its merits. I believe that we have something to stand on. We can identify some of the educational deficiencies in the state, and here is a way that we believe needed services can be provided economically and efficiently. In my opinion the real resistance will come from some of the professional people themselves. On the other hand, some professional organizations are in full support of the program. Generally, the superintendents are behind this program in Iowa because they see it not as a threat to their autonomy, but as a real service to their school district.

Comment from Senator Ross Rasmussen, Nebraska: I sponsored the highly contested bill for the educational service units in Nebraska. It is still standing. I have observed that this middle unit has been able to get immediate results. The rank and file of the people in rural areas of Nebraska like it.

Concluding remarks by the Chairman:

1. It appears that there are needed services in education which are not presently being provided.
2. It does not appear that local districts are going to be able to provide them, even after they are reorganized.
3. There are alternatives to be studied for providing these services, with the intermediate, or area education service district being one which must be given consideration.

THE BOCES ORGANIZATION IN NEW YORK

(continued from page 6)

Educational Services. Some of its characteristics are the following:

1. It is a cooperative arrangement among school districts.
2. Local boards of education in each local school district elect to become members.
3. The executive officer is referred to as the District Superintendent. He has both local and state responsibilities, but is appointed locally.
4. The BOCES Board is made up from five to nine members elected at an annual meeting of all the trustees and board members of all the member districts. They serve a five-year term, and are elected on a staggered basis. The members so elected may or may not be from local board membership.
5. BOCES are service areas. They do not:
   a. Have any taxing power.
   b. Provide any service that has not been previously requested by the local districts involved and that has not been approved by the State Education Department in the name of the Commissioner of Education.
6. It provides leadership through influence, not through mandate.
7. BOCES has been designated as the unit with administrative responsibility for vocational education. There are 35 such centers in operation at this time.
8. BOCES can construct facilities financed through the New York State Dormitory Authority (none have been voted to date for vocational education, special education, and administrative service complexes).
9. The major strengths of BOCES include the following:
   a. It is established by request by local districts.
   b. It is a flexible organization.
   c. It can provide almost any type of educational service for local districts that might be required of it.
10. Some local school districts, with limited funds and enrollments cannot secure all of the services that should be provided to the boys and girls within that district. BOCES, upon request, can provide shared services to help bolster the local district program.
11. The educational unit of the future is the BOCES.
12. BOCES may be multi-county.

Question: Why did New York go the BOCES route rather than create local school districts of sufficient size to do the job?

Answer by Mr. Sparks: New York has no official figure on size. Those who work with BOCES do feel that:

1. A local district should be K–12.
2. An enrollment of 5,000 to 6,000 pupils is large enough to provide an adequate educational program, but not enough for adequate special services, or the very highly specialized services. This includes computer centers for data processing and computerized instruction, and special education programs for the physically and mentally handicapped and the emotionally disturbed as well as occupational (vocational) education.
3. BOCES can provide these programs and services.
4. The only districts that are not permitted to be members of BOCES are those with an enrollment of over 125,000.

Question: It is your belief, Mr. Sparks, that a district with 5,000 pupils, K–12, can provide quality programs in certain areas but not all, and that there must be some kind of intermediate unit, such as BOCES, to provide these related programs and services?

Answer: That is right.

Question: What about the more sparsely populated areas?

Answer: BOCES is still the answer. It is especially important for the school district that is less than adequate from the standpoint of enrollment.

Question: How are the BOCES Units financed?

Answer: Local school districts request the service. They are assessed their proportionate share of the cost. In turn, they receive state aid on the basis of a percentage figure developed with relation to district real property wealth.

Question: How are the district boundaries for BOCES established?

Answer: I think this is determined largely in the Educational Department in consultation with the local people. It is an outgrowth of the small one-room school district which may be centralized at one time with a dozen others to form a central school, and they in turn get together to form a BOCES. It is a process of evolution.

Question: What about the training of the district superintendents?

Answer: I think the next five years will see a majority of our district superintendents holding doctorates. They are educational leaders.

Question: What about lay acceptance of BOCES?

Answer: There is a lay commitment to the BOCES programs, and there is a complete understanding of what BOCES does. The public looks upon it as the guiding hand and the father of some things that might be good.

Question: Is BOCES just another way to delay or retard local school district reorganization?

Answer: No, I don't believe that it is. Although we do not like mandates, the Department can be a little arbitrary to do so to accomplish reorganization.

Question: What about school building construction?

Answer: Any building constructed has to have a complete BOCES area referendum.

Question: What is the Department's reaction to the Lindsay report for New York City?

Answer: I wouldn't mind answering it if I knew what I was really talking about. New York City is unique in that it licenses its own teachers and does a great number of things in which the State Department is not involved. Obviously, a city the size of New

(continued on page 8)

MULTI-COUNTY REGIONAL DISTRICTS AS VIEWED BY A COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT

IRA LARSON

Superintendent, Linn County Schools
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Editor's note: Dr. Larson came as a guest to the Conference. Although he was not scheduled on the program, provision was made for him to report and to respond to questions about the proposed multi-county organization as recommended in the study just completed by Dr. Stephens.

Question: Recently you secured a grant of $98,000 to conduct a study which has recommended a multi-county regional district to replace the existing seven county districts. Why did you go toward a multi-county superimposed district rather than to local school districts of sufficient size to be self-sustaining in programs and services?

Answer: Education is a function of the state, and as such, should be responsive to the needs within the state. I am trying to be realistic. Present state standards, at least in Iowa, make possible such small districts (300, K–12) that they cannot provide the essential programs and services. If the state were to mandate a local school district of 75,000 students, I think that this would be a bit unrealistic. Also, there is the very real desirability of keeping a board of education within reasonable reach of the people. One board of education dealing with all of the problems in a multi-county area would have difficulty in getting or giving adequate attention to all of the problems that are involved. Also, it would tend to become unresponsive to the matter of costs. If and when we have only 16 local school districts in Iowa, they are not going to be very local.

Question: Does this mean that you believe that the needs, as reflected in the will of the people, can best be served by adequately organized local districts, each of which is a member of an area group for certain programs and services?

Answer: That is correct. We moved in this direction because local school superintendents were saying to us:

1. The AESA (area educational service agency) should take care of special needs which we have never been able to provide.
2. The AESA should deal with such problems as in-service education for our teachers, special education programs, etc.
3. The AESA should provide all of those programs and services to which we cannot give proper attention because we're caught up in the day-to-day operations of our local school district.

Question: Would all districts in the area be members of the AESA?

Answer: Yes, all types of districts—independent, community, and consolidated.

Question: Would independent school districts have their own local school boards?

Answer: Absolutely. The local districts would not be affected in any way, except as they receive services from the intermediate area. The normal reorganizations could still go on, and the intermediate office would have responsibilities for these reorganization matters instead of the county offices as at the present time.

Question: How would the intermediate unit be financed?

Answer: It would have its own taxing authority.

Question: How do you feel about superimposing districts on top of districts?

Answer: This is not as bad as it sounds. For example:

1. If our seven counties go together as proposed, seven county districts will be eliminated and replaced by one district, with a single taxing authority.
2. We expect that the AESA will coincide with the boundaries of the already established vocational and community college areas, so we are not creating another taxing area, since it is already there.

Question: Would you place vocational education under the AESA Board?

Answer: No. The Area Vocational Community College Board is a board dealing with post-high school problems, and should continue to have that area of responsibility. There should be an entirely separate board for the AESA, though it is the same area that is involved. The reason is that the problems are entirely different. The one board deals with pre-school through grade 12, while the other deals with vocational and college-level programs which are post-high school.

Question by Representative Spainhower, Missouri: Do you think it is feasible to propose a plan of reorganization which includes both local school districts and intermediate districts? Which should come first?

Answer: It would be desirable if both could come at the same time. If a choice must be made, I would begin with the regional or intermediate district. Properly implemented, this will bring some changes in the local school districts, with services that cannot be provided without the intermediate district, unless the local districts are very large.

Answer by Dr. Stephens: Put all of your tags in the regional basket. Actually, developments in the intermediate area and at the local level should complement each other.

THE BOCES ORGANIZATION IN NEW YORK

(continued from page 7)

York under one school system has gotten out of hand with its unique problems.

One aspect of the problem is financing. According to the present state aid formula, New York receives X number of dollars. If they were divided into 25 or more school districts, they would receive more state aid. This is what new York has been requesting for a long time. I think they need it.

THE VOICE OF THE CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

The members of the Conference were divided into eight discussion groups. An opportunity was provided for each one to comment on or to react to any aspect of the various reports on area educational service districts, including the position paper and the discussion period which followed. Suggestions were particularly requested that would be helpful to the Project Directors in the designing of criteria and guidelines for school district organization.

The "voice" of the conference participants is expressed in the following summary of reports received from the chairmen of each of the eight discussion groups:

Organization

- All groups gave general support to the need for some form of an intermediate unit, or area educational service district (although some members preferred large administrative districts).
- Area education districts are necessary if optimum programs are to be provided for all students.
- Detailed planning should precede the formation of the area districts.
- A significant revamping of any echelon of school organization cannot be planned or accomplished with satisfactory results if done in isolation. Planning for improvements at local, intermediate, and state department levels must proceed with adequate consideration of and coordination with all echelons.
- The concept of area education development is good.
- The plan for area educational districts may take different forms in each state.
- We support the three-level system more or less as defined by Dr. Stephens.
- All schools in a state should be a part of an area educational service agency.
- Some members of one group liked the New York plan; others liked the proposal by Dr. Stephens.
- Area districts must be flexible enough to be practical.
- Some participants questioned 30,000 as a minimum enrollment, although generally it was considered feasible.
- The inclusion of large metropolitan school districts in area education districts must be based on existing state laws and organization, and on the services expected.

Control

- The AESD should be under the direct control of a board elected from the area.
- The AESD should be responsible to the state department for carrying out some regulatory functions.
- A lay board should set policy, adopt budgets, and establish performance levels.
- The AESD should be locally controlled.
- A suggestion was made that local school districts might tend to shift to the AESD responsibility which should be discharged by the local district.

Programs

- Services and programs can emanate from various levels of organization.
- The AESD should concern itself with those services which cannot be provided adequately and efficiently by the local district (three groups mentioned this).
- AESD districts are needed to provide supplemental services that are necessary in most schools if broad programs needed to meet the needs of boys and girls are to be made available.

Local School Districts

- Some members of (one) group proposed that a large comprehensive local administrative unit could do the job (including vocational education) as well as or better than the regional agency.
- The local school district might tend to shift to the regional agency responsibility which should be discharged by the local district.
- The group recognized that we need further enlargement of school districts even if the plan for regional agencies was adopted.
- We believe in a strong local district organization in terms of financial and pupil resources. High schools with enrollments in excess of 600 could well afford to offer a comprehensive educational program satisfying the needs of up to 95 percent or more of the people.

Leadership

- Leadership for the AESD must be outstanding.
- Much consideration needs to be given to pre-service and in-service training for AESD administrators.

Finance

- The AESD should be supported from a combination of local taxes, state aid, and receipts from local districts for services performed.
- The AESD should have taxing authority.
- State aid should serve as an incentive for program development and operation.
- Equalization of assessments within and among counties is essential in planning for area and regional districts.
- Some participants expressed reluctance to create new taxing units.

The State Department of Education

- The role of the State Department of Education needs to be more clearly defined in terms of its relationship to the AESD Units.

(continued on page 10)

NEW AND EMERGING CONCEPTS FOR THE AREA EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCIES

1. The inclusion of all districts in an AESD.
2. The AESD coterminous with a socio-economic area.
3. Coordination of the AESD with governmental planning and developmental proposals in other areas.
4. Flexibility of the AESD and adaptability of it to demographic change.
5. Development of coordinated business functions in and through the AESD for an entire area.

THE VOICE OF THE PARTICIPANTS

(continued from page 9)

- The State Department of Education must assume a role of leadership and coordination in its relationship with the AESD Units.
- The area education districts must not fragment state departments of education, but rather complement and strengthen them.
- The AESD should cooperate with the state education agency in performing the leadership function in relation to local school districts.
- We believe that the state system should have a strong, well-staffed state education agency to perform the necessary regulatory functions and to stimulate both the regional and the local districts through its leadership function. In this way the state educational offerings can be kept in line with the needs of both youth and adults.
- The State Department of Education should coordinate the activities and programs of the AESD Unit.

THE GREAT PLAINS
SCHOOL DISTRICT ORGANZATION PROJECT
411 S. 13th Street
Lincoln, Nebraska 68508

RALPH D. PURDY, *Project Director*
FLOYD A. MILLER, *Chairman Steering Committee*

State Directors:

Iowa—ELLIS HANSON
Missouri—ARTHUR SUMMERS
Nebraska—ROGER HANSON, ROGER FARRAR, WILLIAM SCHROEDER
SOUTH DAKOTA—EARL BOXA

Steering Committee:

DAVID GILLILAND
KENNETH KIRCHNER
JAMES SCHOOLER
FLOYD A. MILLER

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AREAS AND AREA EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCIES

State demographic studies indicate that there are emerging socio-economic areas which represent a convergence of business, industrial, and retail and wholesale trade interests and activities. In these areas there exists a polarity of interests among the people for various purposes, including business, pleasure, and other. Indicators of such areas include studies of highway traffic movement, sales tax returns, and indicies of business activity and of industrial and agricultural production. Such areas are currently being identified by sociologists, political scientists, economists, urban and state planning organizations, planning committees for the governor of the state or for the state legislature, and other interested study and planning groups.

Education should be an integral part of the total governmental services provided for of the people of the state. It cannot be provided for by one agency of government operating separately from other governmental agencies. It has been observed that there is a governmental or instructional planning agency in many states that has developed, or is in the process of developing, statewide plans based on the socio-economic areas of the state. Education should be a part of this total planning process, and the area educational service districts should be coterminous with the emerging statewlde socio-economic areas for related governmental structures and services. This is to say that the area educational service district should be identical with the socio-economic areas being developed through the governor's office or some other state planning agency.

INTERROGATION PANEL

WILLIAM SCHROEDER, *Chairman, Project Co-Director,* Nebraska

HAROLD BUCKINGHAM, *former Senator,* South Dakota

JOHN P. KIBBIE, *Senator,* Iowa

JOHN LYNCH, *Executive Secretary,* Nebraska State Education Asosciation

GORDON NELSON, *Executive Secretary,* Associated School Boards of South Dakota

ROSS RASMUSSEN, *Senator,* Nebraska

NORMAN RUTGERS, *Assistant to the President,* Lennox Industries, Inc., Marshalltown, Iowa

JAMES I. SPAINHOWER, *Representative; Chairman,* House Education Commission, Missouri